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# asiangolf

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THE

# World's Best

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ISSUE

**235** asiangolf  
MAY 2020



We are proud to unveil the latest developments of the giant Mission Hills Golf Resort – a set of projects designed to elevate it to another level of excellence – a level that further consolidates it into simply the best in the world! The latest addition to the resort are massive new attractions in the already successful Terra Art Ecological Park, located in the city of Shenzhen. The expansion features the region's first indoor ice sports training centre and a new indoor aquarium. The 12,000 square meter ice sports training centre will be an unprecedented project and will provide a year-round cooling respite and a great boost for both sports and tourism across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.

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### 32 MASTER SELF-IMAGE AND SEE YOURSELF GROW!

Self-image in golf or for that matter in any sport is critical. ASIAN GOLF ran this challenge by its Master Coach, Shawn Humphries to see what he had to say. Like the top world class coach that he is, Shawn had two words for us – SELF IMAGE. In this month's commentary, he unravels the importance of self-image and the role that it plays in the performance end of golf.

### 40 JACK'S TOP GUN SEES GREAT DAYS AHEAD!

There is a new man calling the shots at the world's most successful golf course design company and he is Paul Stringer, a 35-year veteran in the golf business. A respected professional in the industry, he recently ascended to the title of President of the Nicklaus Design Company worldwide and has taken over the direction of a team of specialists in agronomy and landscape architecture. In an exclusive interview with ASIAN GOLF, Stringer shared some of his thoughts about the Asia Pacific region.

### 54 AND THE GOLD MEDAL GOES TO ZEON!

In a relatively short period, ZEON turfgrass has left its mark on world class golf courses in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam with more to come. Perhaps it would not be wrong to call ZEON the "Usain Bolt" of the turf industry. Like Bolt, ZEON is winning with such frequent regularity that its achievements to date are absolutely Olympian! The two pioneers who worked hard to bring ZEON to Asia are David Doguet, founder and president of the giant Bladerunner Farms, where ZEON is grown and Brad Burgess, the founder and managing director of Sports Turf Solutions (STS), a top supplier of products and services to the golf club industry in the region.

### 66 POST COVID-19 – WHAT'S IN STORE?

Never since the Great Depression in North America, has the golf industry experienced the sort of uncertainty that the dreaded Coronavirus has unleashed across the entire world. For an assessment of how the industry will roll back post pandemic, ASIAN GOLF consulted one of its resident advisors, the Legendary Guru and marketing oracle Andrew Wood and the following are his thoughts.

### 72 FUN – SO ESSENTIAL IN JUNIOR GOLF DEVELOPMENT!

For more than fifteen years, ASIAN GOLF has had the opportunity of playing fly-on-the-wall to watch first-hand, how junior golfers are introduced to the game of golf especially in Southeast Asia. To say that it was revealing in a bad sort of way, would be an understatement! ASIAN GOLF turned to James Herbert who is attached to the PGA of America Junior Golf Development programme at Mission Hills in China for his thoughts on how a junior golf development programme should be set up and the following are his thought.

### 80 PGA TOUR: IMMELMAN TAKES ON A DAUNTING CHALLENGE!

The next Presidents Cup will be played on U.S. soil at the Quail Hollow Club in North Carolina. The International team will be led by Trevor Immelman from South Africa. The PGA Tour's Chuah Choo Chiang shares his thoughts with ASIAN GOLF as to how he thinks Trevor Immelman will step up to the plate.

### 90 THE PASSING OF AN ASIAN GOLF LEGEND

Conrado Benitez, a great Filipino national and an Asian golf legend passed away in March. To mark this remarkable man's life and contribution to golf, ASIAN GOLF proudly presents a special requiem prepared by one of his best friends, James G. Prusa.

**SHARED THOUGHTS | THE GREAT BOUNCE BACK!**

- LEADING YOURSELF, YOUR TEAM AND YOUR CLUB BACK TO THE FUTURE! | BY JAMES CRONK
- ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY | BY GREGG PATTERSON





**NICKLAUS**

DESIGN

There is a new man calling the shots at the world's most successful golf course design company and he is Paul Stringer, a 35-year veteran in the golf business. A respected professional in the industry, he recently ascended to the title of President of the Nicklaus Design Company worldwide and has taken over the direction of a team of specialists in agronomy and landscape architecture.

In an exclusive interview with ASIAN GOLF, Stringer shared some of his thoughts about the Asia Pacific region, a region that he knows like the back of his hand. Known for his conservative stance of the golf business, he took a look into his crystal ball and this is what he saw for the future of golf in the Asia Pacific geography.

# JACK'S TOP GUN SEES GREAT DAYS AHEAD!

“Asia and specifically Southeast Asia, has been experiencing many new golf courses being developed. There is also a nice trend of existing golf courses going through various renovation programmes to enhance their asset and be more competitive in their respective markets.” Key markets that he pick out include Japan, Korea, China, Thailand as well as Vietnam. “Vietnam continues to be the hottest pocket of new golf course development with a window of 3-5 years for new golf courses to be built”, Stringer said.

Continuing with his focus on Southeast Asia, Stringer feels that locations like Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia are experiencing growth in their expansion partly due to the promotion of their respective tourism and golf tourism attractions. “Countries that have a good direction from the government with a combination of public/private investment into their tourism and marketing, are the most successful,” Stringer pointed out. He went on to explain that Vietnam is leading that charge and said, “Their government understands the resources they have (beautiful land, beaches, great food, kind people) and are marketing that as part of their overall marketing campaign.” He also attributed Vietnam’s success in golf promotion to its very young population demographics which is very entrepreneurial and looking to drive the economy.



NICKLAUS CLUB BEIJING





Prior to his new assignment, Stringer spent a good deal of time in China and has an excellent understanding of where golf stands in the Middle Kingdom. "Golf will never be a major sport in China unless the government changes their opinion on golf courses. Whilst China has an Olympic golf team, training programmes, PGA and LPGA Tour players and some great professional golf tournaments, things will only progress further with more cooperation from the government." However, Stringer is hopeful that with golf in the Olympics and seeing progress of the Chinese professional golfers, there will be greater awareness of golf in China. "Junior programmes like the PGA Junior League and other initiatives could really help grow the game subject to the government's approval ..... if the government lifts the ban on the development of golf courses, China golf could really take off as would other "entertainment" facilities like simula-

tors, "Top Golf" type driving ranges, and executive golf courses," he added.

The interview with Stringer was a wide-ranging discussion which covered a range of different topics. ASIAN GOLF now presents some excerpts from the interview:

**ASIAN GOLF:** AS PRESIDENT OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL GOLF COURSE DESIGN COMPANY IN THE WORLD, GIVE US YOUR TAKE ON THE STATE OF GOLF AS YOU SEE IT ON A GLOBAL SCALE?

**PAUL STRINGER:** I am optimistic about the state of golf on a global scale. In the United States the number of golfers is off our peak of 2003 at slightly over 30 million golfers at 16,000 facilities. As of the end of the 2018 year, our data and that of the National Golf Foundation state that golfers were just over 24 million at 14,600 facilities. The decrease in the golf courses was due to the gradual

“ IT IS EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY IN THE GOLF INDUSTRY TO ASSIST IN THE EFFORT TO GROW THE GAME AND TO PROVIDE NEW INITIATIVES THAT WILL CONTINUE TO EITHER ADD GOLFERS OR RETAIN EXISTING GOLFERS. THERE IS ALWAYS MORE FOR ALL OF US TO DO, BUT SOME OF THE GOLF BODIES ARE COLLECTIVELY ADDING NEW PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES TO RETAIN OR GROW THE GAME OF GOLF. ”



FLC QUY NHON GOLF LINKS (OCEAN COURSE) - HOLE 1 FAIRWAY



FLC QUY NHON GOLF LINKS (OCEAN COURSE) - HOLE 11



DANANG GOLF CLUB UNDER LIGHTS TWILIGHT COURSE

correction needed to balance supply and demand. Too many golf courses were added from the mid 1980's to 2005. Most of these were high-end golf courses. Golf in Asia continues to grow especially in areas of Southeast Asia. I am excited about the progress of these new golf courses. Other future new golf courses will be developed in regions like Eastern Europe, Africa and Mexico/Latin America. There will continue to be a large renovation business worldwide in more mature markets like the USA and Europe in addition to Asia.

**ASIAN GOLF:** IN MANY PARTS OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, INCLUDING AUSTRALIA IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE, GOLF HAS BEEN ON A GRADUAL STATE OF DECLINE WITH A DROP IN ROUNDS PLAYED, INCREASED PLAYER ATTRITION AND GOLF COURSE CLOSURES. DO YOU SEE THIS TREND LEVELLING OFF AT SOME POINT?

**STRINGER:** Mature golf markets in Europe, Japan, Korea have been stable now after some closures and some renovations. I am encouraged with the growth of the game and growth of golf courses in several markets in the Asia Pacific

region. Additionally, it is good to see that there is an increase in "off golf course" participation such as driving ranges, simulators, and entertainment type facilities like Top Golf where there is involvement in golf at increasing levels.

**ASIAN GOLF:** THERE HAVE BEEN MANY REASONS BANNED AROUND FOR THE MALAISE THAT GOLF IS IN - IS ENOUGH BEING DONE BY THE GATEKEEPERS OF GOLF TO TURN THIS AROUND AND ARE THEY DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

**STRINGER:** There have been many reasons for the closure of golf courses and a decreased number of golfers on a global scale. It is everyone's responsibility in the golf industry to assist in the effort to grow the game and to provide new initiatives that will continue to either add golfers or retain existing golfers. There is always more for all of us to do, but some of the golf bodies are collectively adding new programmes and initiatives to retain or grow the game of golf. Organizations such as the PGA of America, PGA Tour,



JNGCK 16TH GREEN



JNGCK 15HOLE FAIRWAY



OAKMONT JAPAN

manufacturers, USGA, R and A, First Tee, design companies, management companies, and World Golf are always instituting ways to make the game fun, interesting and faster to play and more affordable.

**ASIAN GOLF:** AS SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN ENGAGED WITH THE GOLF INDUSTRY FOR MANY YEARS, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IS DUE TO A GENERATIONAL PROBLEM IN THAT GOLF HAD ITS PEAK WITH BABY BOOMERS AND HAS SINCE LOST ITS SHINE AND APPEAL TO THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS, NAMELY THE MILLENNIALS AND GENERATION Z?

**STRINGER:** There has been a bit of a generational impact to the golf industry. The baby boomers are not the largest segment of the population anymore although until recently, they were the largest segment of golf participants. They were (and still are) the highest spending generation on goods and services in the golf industry. The industry really changed at the start of the downturn of the economy as there was less capital available for consumer spending on leisure sports- like golf. There are still over six million Millennials playing golf for example in the USA. Generation X now has the largest participation rate. We still have many more years of growth in the Baby Boomers golf population with a large percentage of Baby Boomers who still have not reached 65 years of age. The positive take away are the juniors whose demographics are changing to more female and minority participation than it was ten to twenty years ago. You can evidence this in Asia and Southeast Asia where many of the countries have a very young population base compared to regions like Japan or Eastern Europe, etc.

“ COLLECTIVELY, ALL OF US IN THE GOLF INDUSTRY NEED TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT JUNIOR GOLF INITIATIVES, WHETHER IT IS A FIRST TEE PROGRAMME, JUNIOR LEAGUE PLAY, PLAY IT FORWARD, OR OTHER PROGRAMMES. THE JUNIORS ARE CRITICAL TO OUR FUTURE. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE MORE WOMEN PLAY THE GAME AND STAY IN THE GAME. ”

**ASIAN GOLF:** GIVEN THE SCARCITY OF LAND IN MOST OF ASIA, DOES THIS POSE A CHALLENGE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW GOLF COURSES?

**STRINGER:** Scarcity of good land is going to be a challenge in all markets, not only Asia. While this is a challenge it is also making good use of less than desirable land. Golf course architects and developers will need to be creative with either infill projects or those that are mountainous. Golf courses and developments like the Jack Nicklaus Golf Club in Korea, built on an infill from the Incheon Bay, has had tremendous success such as hosting the 2015 President's Cup and home to many PGA and LPGA tour events. Some of the work we are doing now includes the infill of shrimp farms, and filling wet, less desirable terrain with sand to create "platforms" for golf and development to occur. Location is still a major fac-

“ I AM HOPEFUL THAT THE FUTURE OF THE GOLF INDUSTRY WILL BE STABLE AND SEE A SLIGHT INCREASE IN THE TOTAL GOLF EXPERIENCE. WE ALL NEED TO CONTINUE TO EXPLORE HOW WE BRING IN NEW GOLFERS AND RETAIN EXISTING GOLFERS. ”

tor and having developments and golf courses not far from large cities or population centers is a challenge.

**ASIAN GOLF:** AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF LAND SHORTAGE, DOES THE CONSTRUCTION OF 6- AND 9-HOLE COURSES MAKE GOOD SENSE?

**STRINGER:** Construction of 9-hole golf courses, enhanced practice facilities with large chipping and putting greens as well as instructional academies are trends happening in the USA and globally. Traditional golfers do not want to play just six-holes, so it doesn't really make sense to develop only six-holes. However, there are some 18-hole golf courses that are designed with six-hole loops that gets golfers back closer to the clubhouse after six-holes. This is a good concept in theory for those who don't have the time to play a full nine or eighteen. However, most golfers still want to play at least nine-holes and so I don't think you will see too many six-hole golf courses designed. From a practical standpoint, it is also hard to get all three sets of six-holes to return to the clubhouse. With land shortages, we see more 9-hole par 3 golf courses, large putting greens, and simulator golf for those northern climates. I think this trend will continue as it is still a nice amenity for developers, doesn't take up too much land, and can be played quickly.

**ASIAN GOLF:** ANOTHER CHALLENGE FACED BY MANY COUNTRIES IN ASIA RELATES TO WATER. THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA OF BETTER HYBRID GRASSES THAT REQUIRE LESS WATER AND ARE GENERALLY BETTER SUITED TO THE CLIMATIC CONDITIONS OF ASIA. IS THE TIME RIGHT FOR NEW COURSES TO BEGIN USING THE NEW HYBRIDS TO HELP SAVE WATER USAGE AND REDUCE MAINTENANCE COST?

**STRINGER:** Water quality and the availability of water is always a challenge in the development of golf courses. We try to be good stewards of the environment as do other golf course architects. To that end, some of the design strategy and look is to reduce turf acreage and have more native grasses or native vegetation. This will also require less main-

tenance if done correctly. Having a very good and established irrigation designer is a key asset during the design stage to properly design the irrigation system to have proper spacing and coverage without wasting any water. Water availability in some areas is very scarce, while at other properties there is plenty of water available. Whether it is ground water, effluent water, or city water, we all have to protect the environment and not over water. New irrigation methods, including advanced irrigation systems with special irrigation heads, limits over-spray and properly monitor the amount of water dispersed over a specific area. Additionally, there has been and continues to be, great advancement in the development of grass varieties including hybrids of existing, established

turf. Some of these new strains of grass are more salt tolerant allowing for less than good water to be used to irrigate the golf course. Some of the new grasses also are more drought tolerant and take less water. A skilled agronomist is critical now in most new golf course developments to determine the right turf for the right region of the world. Establishing proper test plots to grow a few varieties of turf on site will assist in making the right decision on turf for that particular location.

**ASIAN GOLF:** WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF GOLF IN THIS, THE THIRD DECADE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM?

**STRINGER:** I am hopeful that the future of the golf industry

will be stable and see a slight increase in the total golf experience. We all need to continue to explore how we bring in new golfers and retain existing golfers. Some of the golf experiences may be unconventional like the Top Golf or entertainment-type model, but if people continue to watch golf on television, have more and more awareness to the game, eventually they may play. It may be nine holes, 18-holes, or just a trip to the local driving range but that is good to help grow the game. Collectively, all of us in the golf industry need to continue to support junior golf initiatives, whether it is a First Tee programme, Junior League play, Play it Forward, or other programmes. The juniors are critical to our future. I would also like to see more women play the game and stay

**E**very single golfer anywhere on the Planet knows who Jack Nicklaus aka The Golden Bear is. They know him for the way he dominated the professional game of golf in an era when he reigned supreme. He is without doubt

the greatest golfer the world has ever seen – he has won 18 professional major championships, and this record still stands today. While his achievements in professional golf ranks as the best ever achieved by any one single man, how much is really known about his achievements in the world of business.

His achievements in the world of business have also been stellar. He has led his business under the flagship known as the Nicklaus Companies for over 30 years. In that time, he has helped build it into a global conglomerate accounting for some US\$400 million in annual revenues.

Through his companies, the golf legend has been able to enhance the golf experience, and to bring to the national and international consumer, golf-related businesses and services

that mirror the high standards established in his career. These services include golf-course design, the development of golf and real estate communities, the marketing and licensing of golf products and services, and event management.

Nicklaus has been involved in the design of 205 courses open for play worldwide, and his thriving business, Nicklaus Design, has 240 courses open for play around the world. Nicklaus Design courses are represented on five continents and in 27 countries and 34 states in North America. Of Nicklaus Design's worldwide total, 62 of those courses have hosted a combined total of close to 350 professional tournaments. Thirty Nicklaus courses have appeared in various national and international Top-100 lists. That's saying a lot for a man who will go down the annals of sports history as a great champion, a wonderful husband, a loving father and grand father and a businessman extraordinaire!





TIANMA MEETING



PAUL STRINGER AND CJ STAFF

in the game. Sometime this is a function of just not enough time to play or the time it takes to play or access in their local communities. We will continue to find ways that will bring in more golfers of all ages, genders, and abilities and make golf fun and affordable. Not only is golf a fun, life-long game with many social attributes, but golf employs a lot of people worldwide. The charitable component of golf and

golf tournaments in local communities along with the PGA Tour, LPGA TOUR, European and Asian Tours throughout the world is terrific. The "give back" component of our industry makes me proud and yet we have so far to go. Golf courses provides great enjoyment and entertainment in the local communities and I am so honored and grateful to take part in a game I love.



PAUL STRINGER AND CHRIS COCHRAN

“ WE WILL CONTINUE TO FIND WAYS THAT WILL BRING IN MORE GOLFERS OF ALL AGES, GENDERS, AND ABILITIES AND MAKE GOLF FUN AND AFFORDABLE. NOT ONLY IS GOLF A FUN, LIFE-LONG GAME WITH MANY SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES, BUT GOLF EMPLOYS A LOT OF PEOPLE WORLDWIDE. ”



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